

## Stranger Feelings by chucks\_prophet

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**Summary:**

He's tried blaming it on Cas. It's always easier to point the finger at the dead guy. But no matter where he points his finger, it'll eventually swing back around to him. Because that's how it is when you lose someone: You lose all sense of direction. You just spiral in a circle of grief.

"How are you—I mean, I watched you..." Dean tapers off, not sure if that's the start or end to his thought. All he knows is Cas standing in front of him.

## Stranger Feelings

### Author's Note:

Yes! I'm back with yet ANOTHER possible coda to the finale. But how could I resist when it comes to Stranger Things?

"Is this Purgatory?"

"No," Dean replies, and maybe that would be relieving if they weren't teleported to a darker and even stickier foil universe. Even the trees don't look like they want to be here, the way they arm themselves with thick, giant vines and webs. "No, I know Purgatory. This place would be crawling with Leviathan by now. Or vampires. Anything. It's too quiet here."

The creepy crawly forest must actually have ears, because after Dean makes that assertion, a high pitched howl rings through the air like an underinflated tire skidding across the road. Dean snaps his head behind him before looking to his brother, whose wrinkled expression reads more of a fact than a dirty diaper: If they linger here too long, they'll be roadkill.

"*Sam!*" Dean yells as he gets knocked on his feet. The ground is like quicksand—no, not quicksand. Webs. Like the ones on the trees. They're alive and wrapping him for early mummification. It's not long before all four of his appendages are writhing underneath hundreds of pounds of silk making its way towards his face.

Dean can see out of the corner of his eye the monster they heard, up close and personal. It's a bare, fleshy, man-like thing with spider-like hands, horns for elbows, and a giant teathy flytrap for a face. Its five pedaled complexion opens to reveal a giant, bottomless hole and from it comes the same high pitched howl when Sam lunges for it with the Demon Knife.

But no dice. The thing just wraps its claws around the blade plunged into its side and pulls it out. Then it grabs Sam by the neck. Like a thumbtack to a cork board, it pins him to the tree in front of him, its

long, grimy thumb digging into Sam's windpipe. Dean tries to scream, but the webbing's past his nose, making it hard for him to even breathe.

"Hey, assbutt!"

Dean must be losing consciousness, because the last thing he sees and hears before the webbing covers him completely is Cas and a fire that consumes the screaming monster whole.

Dean realizes the webbing is gone too when he gasps for air. And staring down at him in what's now a pool of silk is actually—"Cas?!" Sam chokes out just before a coughing fit.

They each stand up in their own time, but Sam's the first one to throw himself into Cas's arms.

Dean watches on, noticing how Sam breathes a heavy sigh over Cas's shoulder, like seeing Cas alive replenishes his lungs.

It's funny because Dean feels like the wind's been knocked out of him again. He's spent so much time *just* breathing—and for what? To be alive? To be living an existence without his best friend?

Cas turns to Dean after hugging Sam, those big blue eyes are just as imploring as ever, like *Cas* is beseeching forgiveness when Dean's been carrying the weight of his death on his shoulders for months, replaying every possible move he could have made to avoid it.

He's *tried* blaming it on Cas. It's always easier to point the finger at the dead guy. But no matter where he points his finger, it'll eventually swing back around to him. Because that's how it is when you lose someone: You lose all sense of direction. You just spiral in a circle of grief.

"How are you—I mean, I watched you..." Dean tapers off, not sure if that's the start or end to his thought. All he knows is Cas standing in front of him.

"I'm not," he replies, eyes not leaving Dean's. The bags under them are darker than usual, giving away his exhaustion. "This place isn't for the living."

"Cas, where are we?" Sam asks. "Heaven, Hell? And how are you here? How are *we* here?"

"Far from either, I'm afraid." Cas pauses. "And honestly, I don't know. It's not easy to get in here. It takes incredible soul power to zap yourself into this universe."

Sam shakes his head. "Well, I didn't... I mean, Dean was upstairs and I was downstairs in the library, looking into a possible siren case in Tacoma."

"Wait," Dean interrupts, "you're saying I tapped into the power of my *soul* to get here?"

Sam looks to Dean with narrowed brows. "What? How do you know it was you—?"

"I could feel it."

Dean and Sam snap their heads to Cas. Cas bites his lip and turns to face both of them. "In this realm, I'm human—but not fully. It's like my grace is being suppressed. I can still feel Dean's soul."

"Henry was right," Sam scoffs, slapping Dean's shoulder. "Remember, he told us he tapped into the power of his soul to travel through time. It's a Men of Letters spell, and you just cracked it!"

"But why would I choose to zap us *here*?"

"Your soul must have chosen it," Cas says. "Soul traveling hones in on pain, longing—emotions strong enough to power an escape pod to another dimension. Most of the time, the spell caster chooses a specific place. But other times, it can be a..." Cas winces. "Sometimes it can be a person."

Dean swallows thickly. He may not have seen himself in the mirror recently, but he can feel the beard prickling his chin and his once-fitting clothes hanging off him like a scarecrow. He can't even remember the last time he brushed his teeth.

And Cas could feel him suffering for months without end. He couldn't taste the liquor on his lips, but he could feel the hopelessness as the

fire Dean's tried so hard to put out inside grew hotter. He couldn't smell the scent of his own trenchcoat after Dean's spent too many nights trying to scrub the blood out of it, but he could feel his desperation. He couldn't hear Dean's prayers, but he could feel the emptiness behind them.

He couldn't feel Dean's hands nursing his favorite pistol, but he could feel the longing for that, too.

"Okay," Sam starts, clearing his throat, "so if Dean got us here, then he can take us back, right?"

"All three of us?" Dean adds, voice cracking.

Cas's lip twitches. "It's hard to say. Dean didn't even know he was capable of such power until now. Just like Eleven gave her life to destroy the Monster, the Demogorgon, they called it."

"Who's they, Cas?" Sam asks. "And who's Eleven?"

"The Hawkins boys, they called her Eleven. And this..." Cas looks around them and that's enough to set off a chain of high-pitched screams *not* belonging to the Demogorgon. "This is the Upside Down."

"I'm still not following." Dean's barely even following Cas being alive. There's no way he's going to follow a Narnia-disenchanted *Little Shop of Horrors* land.

"Years ago, the fall of 1983, to be precise, a group of kids stumbled upon a girl they called Eleven," Cas begins, "She was subjected to a series of experiments conducted by her tyrant of a father, Dr. Martin Brenner. The experiments took place in a dimension far too dangerous for man, let alone a child. The Upside Down is a place angels have known about for a few centuries—which, granted our lengthy existence, isn't long at all—and humans like Dr. Brenner had only begun to grasp it."

"So no one knows how to get out of here," Dean finishes.

Cas shakes his head. Then, for the first time in months, Dean decides to take action.

"What are you doing?" Sam asks.

"I'm trying to get us out of here, what's it look like?"

"Like you're pushing out the biggest crap of the century."

"It can't be done with the power of thought," Cas says, "It has to be felt. That's what makes emotions so dangerous to angels holding souls; they could be corrupted with the slightest touch of them."

Dean releases the hold on his body with a sigh.

"I think I have an idea," Sam says before he's disappearing behind Dean.

Steadying himself on the lapel of Cas's trench as he's thrust into him by a pair of extremely moose-like hands, Dean somehow finds all the balance he needs this close to Cas.

In a place as dark as this, Cas's eyes still don't lose their shine, and serve as Dean's only flashlight to getting out of his own convoluted mess of a mind. His face matches the color of his hands gripping the life out of Dean's own lapels. His mouth is slightly parted, his breath warm and labored. His lips are a little bit creased, but they make for perfect bedding when Dean closes the gap between sleep deprivation and sweet, sweet dreams.

Dean holds back a whimper when Cas kisses him back because nothing, not even their sudden change in scenery, will separate him from what he should have done years ago.

Especially now that he's finally breathing. And not just so he can live: so he can keep living *with* Cas, in this moment.

Dean just never thought he'd actually get to do it.

Then again, stranger things have happened.